

Institutionalizing FAC(A) Doctrine & Training Standards for US Army Rotary Wing Aircraft Pilots

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Institutionalizing FAC(A)  
Doctrine & Training Standards  
for US Army Rotary Wing Aircraft Pilots

Marine EWS Contemporary Issue Paper

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## **Introduction**

Today, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) is the only Department of Defense organization that extensively employs forward air controllers (airborne) [FAC(A)] to conduct air and ground combat operations. Following a recent joint fires symposium attended by representatives from each service of the Department of Defense, a joint memorandum of agreement (JMOA) was created (see Appendix A), establishing the minimum qualification standards for fixed and rotary wing pilots to become joint FAC(A)s. However, the United States Army has yet to establish policies that support the development of FAC(A) doctrine or training standards for their rotary wing aircraft pilots. Until then, ground combat commanders will continue to endure the consequences of not employing FAC(A) to support their ground schemes of maneuver. The United States Army must institute FAC(A) doctrine and training standards to provide ground commanders with an increased ability to shape the battlespace, to employ combined arms, and to maintain operational flexibility.

## **The Current Situation**

Today, the United States Army primarily employs two rotary wing attack helicopter platforms in support of light, medium, and heavy ground combat units: The OH-58D Kiowa Warrior and AH-64 Apache. These platforms are utilized to conduct

shaping operations for ground combat units and to support the ground commander's scheme of maneuver. Currently, both rotary wing attack helicopter platforms are employed extensively in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, the United States Army has failed to exploit the full potential capabilities associated with rotary wing attack helicopter platforms. Without FAC(A) doctrine and training standards, Army rotary wing pilots cannot fully employ the supporting arms available to set conditions for ground combat units or to support the ground scheme of maneuver to the maximum extent possible. Instead, Army rotary wing pilots today are limited to employing their own weapon systems and ordnance against existing threats within the ground commander's battlespace.

#### **Proposed FAC(A) Employment**

Through the years, FAC(A)s have played pivotal roles in the accomplishment of military objectives on the tactical level of war. *Joint Publication 1-02, The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines FAC(A) as "specifically trained and qualified aviation officers who exercise control from the air of aircraft engaged in close air support of ground troops."<sup>1</sup> In the Marine Corps, FAC(A)s have evolved into an asset with unmatched battlefield utility that even *Joint Publication 1-02* fails to describe in sufficient

detail. Marine FAC(A)s are trained not only to "exercise control from the air of aircraft,"<sup>2</sup> but also to coordinate and employ all available supporting arms from the air to exploit the ground commander's targeting requirements in support of his scheme of maneuver.

The Marine Corps requires its FAC(A)s to develop and retain a multitude of supporting arms skills, such as the ability to terminally control fixed and rotary wing aircraft and surface-to-surface indirect fires. Trained and certified Marine FAC(A)s are also capable of clearing and adjusting artillery/naval gunfire, executing indirect fire plans, laser designating targets for engagement by fixed wing aviation precision guided munitions (PGMs), and conducting battle hand over procedures for control of fire support assets. Most importantly, FAC(A)s are capable of detecting and attacking targets with supporting arms forward of the ground combat element. Without instituting FAC(A)s, United States Army ground commanders will not maximize the effects of fires to accomplish objectives within their battlespace.

### **Institutionalizing Doctrine & Training Standards**

The logical starting point for the development of doctrine and training standards already exists. Marine Corps doctrine, orders, academic support packages (ASP), and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) have already been developed

and are easily accessible through numerous intra-service agencies, such as the Marine Air Weapons & Tactics Training Squadron 1 (MAWTS 1) and the USMC Training & Education Command (TECOM). These references provide a foundation that has been exercised, tested, assessed, and validated at the Marine Air Ground Combat Center and in various combat environments. By utilizing Marine Corps doctrine and training standards as a model (see Appendix B), the Army will able to develop its own doctrine, training standards, and methods of employing of rotary wing FAC(A)s more rapidly.

The Marine Corps doctrinal approach to combined arms warfare and the integration of supporting arms is one of the cornerstones of its warfighting philosophy. At MAWTS 1, instructors train pilots on the complexities associated with aviation training and weapons employment in support of Marine ground combat units. The mission of MAWTS 1 is "to provide standardized advanced tactical training and certification of unit instructor qualifications that support Marine Aviation Training and Readiness and to provide assistance in the development and employment of aviation weapons and tactics."<sup>3</sup> Several aviation courses are conducted at MAWTS 1, and the Weapons & Tactics Instructor (WTI) course is the course aviation pilots must complete to receive a FAC(A) instructor qualification. As a result, these FAC(A) instructors are able

to go back to their home station to certify pilots within their squadron as FAC(A)s based on MAWTS 1 and TECOM training and readiness requirements.

At TECOM, the Marine Aviation training branch is responsible for developing training and readiness standards for all Marine aviation units and pilots. The Aviation training branch publishes these documents in the form of Marine Corps orders (MCOs) that outline the requirements for pilots to obtain and maintain qualifications in specific skill sets, including those for FAC(A)s. The Marine Corps has established MCOs outlining training and readiness standards for FA-18D Hornet, AH-1W Cobra, and UH-1 Huey FAC(A)s. By developing similar FAC(A) doctrine and training standards, the Army will ultimately allow its ground commanders to accomplish military objectives within their battlespace more effectively.

#### **Shaping the Battlespace**

Ground commanders conduct effective shaping operations by leveraging all available combat power to bear against an identifiable threat within their assigned battlespace. *Field Manual 3-0, Army Operations*, states "shaping operations at any echelon create and preserve conditions for the success of the decisive operation," including lethal activities conducted throughout the area of operation (AO) to affect enemy capabilities and forces, or by influencing enemy decisions.<sup>4</sup>

Commanders conduct shaping operations by focusing the complementary and reinforcing effects of organic and non-organic striking power to create asymmetric advantages in preparation for decisive action. Most importantly, shaping operations seek to exploit enemy gaps and vulnerabilities to allow ground combat units to accomplish military objectives with less casualties.

FAC(A)s are capable of executing a commander's targeting objectives forward of his organic ground combat units with increased operational reach. By utilizing FAC(A)s to conduct shaping operations, ground commanders are able to exploit the advantages associated with rotary and fixed wing platforms to set conditions for future operations and to minimize casualties.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division's Aviation Brigade effectively integrated joint FAC(A)s in support of a variety of deep attack missions to conduct shaping operations for the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault). The Aviation Brigade Commander and his staff huddled together after receipt of their mission for course of action development. The courses of action developed involved the Brigade Fire Support Officer (FSO) requesting pre-planned fixed wing FAC(A)s with strike aircraft to suppress enemy air defense assets (EADA) in support of rotary wing helicopter attack operations. FAC(A)s were on station thirty minutes prior to the initiation of rotary wing attacks, and were focused on engaging EADA target within

specific kill box grid coordinates.

According to the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division's after action report (AAR),

"Having the FAC(A) on station prior to the attack served three primary purposes. First, it allowed iron sight EADA in the area to be attacked with fixed-wing air flying at 10,000 feet AGL and above prior to rotary-wing assets entering their threat rings. Second, it allowed an early "eyes-on" assessment of the target area that was passed to inbound rotary-wing aircraft via the Brigade's TACP assigned frequency (UHF). Finally, the FAC(A) greatly facilitates the control of CAS by untrained observers."<sup>5</sup>

As a result, the FAC(A)s enabled the rotary wing attack assets to be used as maneuver to destroy Iraqi ground combat units in specific engagement areas. These shaping actions undoubtedly contributed to the Aviation Brigade's ability to create more favorable combat force ratios for follow-on 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division operations. Without the FAC(A)s, the Aviation Brigade would not have employed the capabilities necessary to shape the battlespace effectively.

### **Employing Combined Arms**

Ground commanders execute combined arms operations by utilizing organic and non-organic assets to achieve the desired effects on enemy forces. *Field Manual 3-0, Army Operations*, specifically states that "the fundamental basis for the organization and operations of Army forces is combined arms. The ultimate goal of an Army organization is success in combined arms warfare."<sup>6</sup> To achieve success in joint and combined arms warfare, commanders employ ground and aviation

units within their battlespace to place the enemy in physical or psychological dilemmas. True combined arms warfare involves the employment of all available assets, including fixed wing aviation platforms. Without organic fixed wing aviation assets available, the Army relies heavily on its own organic OH-58D Kiowa Warriors and AH-64 Apaches to provide a consistent three dimensional combined arms capability to its ground combat units. By institutionalizing FAC(A)s the Army will enable its ground commanders to maximize the ability of its rotary wing pilots to employ combined arms warfare to the maximum extent possible.

During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division executed a series of combined arms raids to prevent Iraqi artillery units from engaging his subordinate units when they conducted breaches of two obstacle belts in Kuwait. Leaders from within the division task organized the raid forces with an artillery battery escorted by a light armored infantry (LAI) company close to the Kuwait border. Fixed and rotary wing FAC(A)s were requested and allocated for the raid missions. The concept involved moving an artillery battery to the border to fire on targets in Kuwait in order to cause the Iraqi artillery units to respond with counterfire. According to Major General J. M. Myatt, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Commander at the time,

"we would position a Marine EA-6B electronic warfare aircraft inside Saudi Arabian airspace to jam the Iraqi's ground

surveillance radars until after we had fired the artillery battery on the target. Then, just as the battery began its withdrawal phase of the raid, the EA-6B would "turn on the buzzer again. Once they would begin firing, a Marine flying as an airborne forward air controller in a Marine FA-18 would detect their muzzle flashes and then direct the wolfpack of Marine FA-18s and AV-8Bs waiting in orbit to roll in on the firing Iraqi artillery."<sup>7</sup>

The Iraqi artillerymen were placed in a dilemma. If they manned and fired their howitzers at Marine Corps ground forces during combat operations, Marine aircraft would find their locations and destroy them. If they did not, Marine Corps ground units would be able to move into Kuwait unhindered while conducting the breaches of the obstacle belts.

As a result, Iraqi artillery pieces were reported as being unmanned during the execution of additional combined arms raids. FAC(A)s are extremely capable of executing combined arms operations due to their speed, mobility, and ability to acquire targets at increased ranges while utilizing all assets available to place the enemy force in a physical or psychological dilemma.

#### **Maintaining Operational Flexibility**

To be successful on today's battlefields, ground commanders must be able to maintain operational flexibility in order to overcome the challenges associated with the volatile nature of war. War has always been distinctly characterized by attributes such as disorder, chaos, and uncertainty. The combined effects of disorder, chaos, and uncertainty all contribute to create constant friction during war. Shifting enemy situations add to

this friction by creating complex and irregular scenarios for combat units. To accomplish military objectives, ground commanders must be responsive to change and adaptable to shifting situations by maintaining operational flexibility.

Ground commanders employ organic and non-organic aviation assets to maintain operational flexibility when developing battlefield organization<sup>8</sup>. In Vietnam, ground commanders employed FAC(A)s in OV-10 Broncos and other available light aircraft in order to maintain operational flexibility. Due to the restrictive double and triple canopy jungles of Vietnam, ground units were often times unable to gain and maintain observation of enemy forces. As a result, ground FACs were often times ineffective. According to John Schlight, a historian for the Air Force History and Museums Program, "the Air Force quickly adapted its practices to the local conditions by placing its controllers in light aircraft, from which they could better grasp the ground situation and control fighter strikes."<sup>9</sup>

Air Force commanders and Army ground commanders employed aviation assets to provide ground commanders with assets capable of moving forward of their organic units to influence the outcomes of engagements and battles. John Schlight's research thoroughly describes the nature of the capabilities provided by close air support and FAC(A)s:

In some cases, the American and South Vietnamese forces did not wait for a strike on a camp, but hit the gathering enemy before he could attack. In October of 1967, four Vietnamese regiments began moving towards Dak To, a special forces camp and complex in the Kontum Province of Vietnam. The American portion of the operation took place in separate hills around the camp. The triple canopy hindered both ground and air forces. The enemy hugged American troops, making use of heavy ordnance and bombs dangerous to the friendly troops. Nevertheless, nearly 2,100 close air support sorties using largely napalm, 750-pound bombs, and 20mm cannons were instrumental in turning back the North Vietnamese.<sup>10</sup>

As a result, ground commanders extensively utilized close air support and FAC(A)s to maintain operational flexibility. This allowed the ground commander to adjust his operational plans and 'take the fight to the enemy' with assets that were ultimately designed to support his scheme of maneuver.

#### **Counterargument**

There is no doubt that FAC(A)s have been successfully employed throughout history to accomplish the ground commanders tactical objectives, and there are no negative consequences associated with their capabilities. Historical research indicates that the Army has never employed organic, school trained rotary wing FAC(A)s in support of a ground commander's scheme of maneuver. With the legitimization of armed helicopters during the Vietnam War, the Army initiated its own organic version of close air support. The Army should continue to develop its own, internal close air support capabilities by developing the abilities of rotary wing pilots to perform duties as FAC(A)s by using the Marine Corps FAC(A) as a model.

However, because of existing service rivalries, informed skeptics may state that the Army should develop its own FAC(A) doctrine, not utilizing the doctrine or training standards that currently exist within the other services. Today, the Army and the Marine Corps perform similar missions and share the same outlooks on many issues. The Marine Corps has successfully utilized organic FAC(A)s to accomplish objectives on the tactical level of war for years. Marine Corps doctrine has been tested, assessed and validated at combat training centers and in combat. Despite the rivalries that exist between the Army, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps, the Department of Defense continues to move towards the development of joint capabilities that can be employed by all services to conduct joint warfare. For this reason, the Army Aviation Branch must utilize Marine Corps doctrine and training standards as a start point for success.

### **Conclusion**

Through the years, the Air Force and Army have consistently debated over the topic of close air support. Today, the creation of the JMOA establishing the minimum qualification standards for fixed or rotary wing pilots to become FAC(A) symbolizes the current movement towards the improvement of joint air interoperability amongst the services. This current movement provides Army aviation with an opportunity to improve

its ability to support all Army ground commanders. By implementing FAC(A) doctrine and training standards for OH-58D and AH-64 pilots, ground commanders will have an increased ability to shape the battlespace, to employ combined arms, and to maintain operational flexibility within a joint operating environment. Without FAC(A) doctrine and training standards, Army ground commanders will not maximize the kinetic and non-kinetic effects of fires on enemy forces within their battlespace.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> *Joint Publication 1-02, The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, As Amended Through 7 May 2002*, 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Joint Publication 1-02*, 175.

<sup>3</sup> *Marine Air Weapons & Training Squadron One Website*, 4 January 2005, <<http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/mawts1/>>, (15 January 2005).

<sup>4</sup> *Field Manual 3-0, Army Operations*, June 2001, 4-23.

<sup>5</sup> *Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) Website, 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division Operation Iraqi Freedom After Action Report*, 12 January 2005, <[https://call2.army.mil/oif/docs/aars/101st\\_AAR/toc.asp](https://call2.army.mil/oif/docs/aars/101st_AAR/toc.asp)>, (12 January 2005), 7-9.

<sup>6</sup> *Field Manual 3-0, Army Operations*, June 2001, 4-27.

<sup>7</sup> Major General (Ret) James M. Myatt, "Close Air Support & Fire Support in DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM," *Marine Corps Gazette*, May 1998, Volume 82, Issue 5, 70.

<sup>8</sup> Battlefield organization is defined in *FM 3-0, Army Operations* on pg 4-22: "As part of the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP), commanders visualize their battlespace and determine how to arrange their forces. The battlefield organization is the allocation of forces in the area of operation (AO) by purpose. It consists of three all-encompassing categories of operations: decisive, shaping, and sustaining. Purpose unifies all elements of the battlefield organization by providing the common focus for all actions."

<sup>9</sup> John Schlight, *Help From Above: Air Force Close Air Support of the Army, 1946-1973*, (Air Force History and Museums Program, Washington, D.C., 1993), 316.

<sup>10</sup> Schlight, 328.

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2. Field Manual 3-0, *Army Operations*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, 14 June 2001.
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## Appendix A

Joint Close Air Support (JCAS) Action Plan Memorandum of  
Agreement 2004-02 Joint Forward Air Controller (Airborne)

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**JCAS AP MOA 2004-02  
Joint Forward Air Controller (Airborne)  
01 December 2004**

**MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT (MOA)**

**BETWEEN**

**USJFCOM DEPUTY COMMANDER**

**AND**

**U.S. ARMY, OPERATIONS DEPUTY**

**U.S. AIR FORCE, OPERATIONS DEPUTY**

**U.S. MARINE CORPS, OPERATIONS DEPUTY**

**U.S. NAVY, OPERATIONS DEPUTY**

**DIRECTOR OF JOINT STAFF**

**AND**

**UNITED STATES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND DIRECTOR OF  
OPERATIONS, PLANS AND POLICY**

Joint Close Air Support (JCAS) Action Plan Memorandum of Agreement 2004-02  
Joint Forward Air Controller (Airborne)

Purpose: This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) formalizes the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)-chartered Joint Close Air Support (JCAS) Executive Steering Committee's (ESC) recommendation to standardize the services certification, qualification (currency) and training programs for the joint Forward Air Controller (Airborne) (FAC(A)) as addressed in the 2003 JCAS Action Plan. This MOA also addresses a General Accounting Office (GAO) recommendation "to prepare aircraft controllers to perform in a joint environment by standardizing training and certification."

Background: Issue 3 of the 2003 JCAS Action Plan contains three actions designed to standardize training of FAC(A)s throughout the Services. Completion of these actions will improve joint force interoperability and reduce the potential for mishaps and fratricides. A JCAS ESC-directed FAC(A) Working Group was convened and developed recommendations for FAC(A) certification and qualification (currency) requirements and procedures, a methodology for standardization of FAC(A) training procedures, and a associated Joint Mission Task List. The JCAS ESC has endorsed these recommendations. The definition of FAC(A) is contained in JP 1-02 and JP 3-09.3, dated 03 Sep 03.

Scope: This MOA restates the formalized JP 1-02 / JP 3-09.3 FAC(A) definition, and outlines a methodology to establish and maintain standardization of the FAC(A) mission across the services and defines the certification and qualification (to include currency) process. The FAC(A) Joint Mission Tasks List (JMTL) identifies those tasks a FAC(A) must accomplish to achieve certification and maintain qualification of a FAC(A) designation. All currently designated service FAC(A)s are assumed to meet the certification and qualification processes set out in this MOA.

Responsibilities: Services with associated Forward Air Controller (Airborne) (FAC(A)) programs that plan to train FAC(A)s will ensure those programs are in compliance with the certification and qualification (currency) process as outlined in this MOA. Services will ensure that FAC(A)s accomplish the outlined JMTL during the course of their certification and maintain identified qualification requirements.

**1. Joint FAC(A) Training and Standardization Board (JFTSB):** Long term oversight of joint FAC(A) training and standardization will be accomplished through the establishment of the JFTSB. The board's charter is to provide oversight to service FAC(A) programs and promote standardization across service platforms performing the FAC(A) mission. The JFTSB will meet at a minimum on an annual basis and make recommendations to the JCAS ESC for all matters requiring multi-service coordination and agreement. The JFTSB may meet at additional times throughout the Fiscal Year on an as needed basis.

**a. Membership:** Voting membership consists of Service nominated billets responsible for overall Service FAC(A) program management and training. Any service that maintains an approved FAC(A) program is eligible for a voting membership seat on the JFSTB. Initial membership is comprised of the following organizations (billets where applicable):

- 1) USN: NSAWC (FAC(A) Program Manger)

- 2) USMC: MAWTS-1 (FAC(A) Program Manager)
- 3) USAF: ACC/JAGO
- 4) USA: Director DOTD / USAAVNC
- 5) JFCOM: J85

**b.** Board Chairmanship: Chairmanship of the JFSTB will be rotated every 18 months between the voting members. The Chairman will be an O-6 level officer.

1) Additional representation: Service FAC(A) platform representation to the JFTSB will be non-voting members. Any platform performing the FAC(A) mission is eligible to have representation on the JFTSB. Services will assign platform representation.

**c.** Responsibilities:

1) JFTSB: Conduct an annual review of service certification and qualification syllabi for standardization; maintain the Common Academic Syllabus (for schoolhouse reference only) and Enabling Learning Objectives (ELOs); ensure standardization through Joint Mission Task List (JMTL) and Enabling Learning Objectives (ELOs); update joint FAC(A) Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (JTTP) as necessary; review relevant Joint Publications and submit change requests as required; represent the joint FAC(A) community on issues impacting the employment of FAC(A)s; and review the content and use of the joint FAC(A) website.

2) JFTSB Chair: The chair will be responsible for convening the JFTSB annually to review service programs and the joint FAC(A) website (knowledge portal), and to resolve any issues of standardization as required. The chair will report the results of the JFTSB annual meeting to the JCAS ESC.

3) JFTSB members: Members are responsible for collecting and disseminating standardization information and board decisions through their respective service organizations to insure compliance within their respective service/community.

4) Joint FAC(A) website: MAWTS-1 will host the website for the Services. MAWTS-1 will be responsible to the JFTSB chair for the content and maintenance of the site for the joint FAC(A) community.

**2.** FAC(A) Certification and Qualification Process: The FAC(A) certification and qualification process ensures joint commanders are presented with FAC(A)s who meet standardized minimum requirements. These requirements are competency based and may be demonstrated through an appropriate combination of academic, simulator, and flight events. The final recommendation on the suitability of a given service certification rests with the JFSTB, the recommendation will then go to the JCAS ESC to determine what actions should be taken.

**a.** FAC(A) Definition (as defined in JP 1-02 and 3-09.3). “A specifically trained and qualified aviation officer who exercises control from the air of aircraft engaged in close air support of ground troops. The Forward Air Controller (Airborne) is normally an extension of the Tactical Air Control Party. Also called FAC(A).”

**b.** Missions in Support of the TACP: FAC(A)s are required to support the TACP with capabilities defined in the JMTLs, section 3 of this MOA. To function as an airborne extension of the TACP, a FAC(A) must be prepared to conduct the following missions:

- 1) Terminal Attack Control (Type I, II, and III)
- 2) Radio Relay
- 3) Reconnaissance
- 4) Indirect Fires Calls for Fire (CFF)
- 5) Asset coordination / deconfliction
- 6) BDA
- 7) Target Marking / Designation / Coordinate Generation
- 8) Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) coordination

Due to the dynamic nature of current and future CAS, FAC(A)s should be capable of performing Type I, II, and III forms of terminal attack control with fixed wing and rotary wing assets, control indirect fires, and conduct their missions in day, night, permissive, and restrictive threat environments.

**c. FAC(A) Training Definitions.**

- 1) Certified - individuals who satisfactorily complete the appropriate service academic and practical training requirements of a core FAC(A) training curriculum and complete a comprehensive assessment may be granted FAC(A) certification.
- 2) Qualified - a certified FAC(A) who has maintained currency by achieving the established minimum recurring training and assessment requirements in a specific aircraft type/model/series.
- 3) Control - consists of at least one aircraft attacking a surface target. The control begins with a CAS briefing (the 9-line is the JP 3-09.3 standard) from a FAC(A) and ends with either an actual/simulated weapons release or an abort on a final attack run. No more than two controls can be counted per CAS briefing per target.

**d. FAC(A) Certification Process.** Individuals will receive authorized training at organizations with recognized courses. All Service FAC(A) certifications will include an initial academic curriculum that addresses the JMTLs and Joint FAC(A) Common Courseware ELOs located at the joint FAC(A) website. The Common Academic Syllabus maintained by the JFTSB is available for schoolhouse reference only. Additionally, competencies must be demonstrated through JFTSB approved combination of academics, simulators, and flights to include: Type I, II, and III controls, day and night events, restrictive and permissive threat environment events, supporting fires coordination, and fighter, bomber, and rotary wing CAS asset utilization. Services will certify FAC(A)s in accordance with Service regulations and directives, as aligned with established FAC(A) guidelines, using the approved JMTL. To be certified as a FAC(A), the individual must conduct a minimum of 12 controls (8 Type I)<sup>\*</sup>. Four of these controls must have CAS asset expend live or training ordnance<sup>\*\*</sup>. One of the 12 controls must be conducted at night<sup>\*\*\*</sup>. Upon successful completion of a comprehensive evaluation, the individual may be

<sup>\*</sup> A minimum of 8 of the controls must be fixed-wing.

<sup>\*\*</sup> If units are precluded from completing requisite training due to local, host nation, or range restrictions, those portions of certification may be waived until the unit returns to CONUS or deploys to suitable environment.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> Units deployed to or stationed at extreme latitudes (>49 deg) may waive the night control for certification until return to home station where night sorties can be executed. If units are precluded from completing requisite training due to local, host nation, or range restrictions, those

granted a FAC(A) certification. Within 12 months of this MOA being executed, all Services will be in compliance with the MOA's certification requirements.

**e. FAC(A) Qualification Process.** Training requirements include both proficiency and a currency provision. Proficiency will be maintained by controlling a minimum of 6 controls in a six-month period (4 of these 6 controls must be Type I, 1 control must be at night<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, and at least 1 must control an asset that expends ordnance<sup>\*\*</sup>). These control requirements may be tailored to meet each services training cycle if they do not use a six-month window (e.g. 12 controls in a 12 month period, 8 controls will be Type I, a minimum of 2 controls conducted at night<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and a minimum of 2 will control an asset expending ordnance<sup>\*\*</sup>). Currency will be maintained by conducting a minimum of 2 controls every 90 days. Failing to meet either proficiency or currency minimum requirements will result in a FAC(A) being non-qualified. FAC(A)s will satisfy their currency requirements with ground units or TACPs whenever possible. Commanders are encouraged to establish guidance and goals within local constraints aimed at achieving greater joint interoperability.

**f. FAC(A) Re-qualification Process.** A FAC(A) who fails to comply with currency requirements loses their qualification. To regain qualification, a FAC(A) must complete a requalification program IAW Service Directives that addresses the shortfalls from the previous six months. FAC(A)s who are unqualified for 18 consecutive months must regain qualification by completing a Service approved refresher syllabus and a minimum of 6 controls (4 Type I, one of the six at night<sup>\*\*\*</sup>, and at least 1 controlling an asset expending ordnance<sup>\*\*</sup>) Upon successful completion of a comprehensive re-qualification, the individual will be re-qualified as a FAC(A).

**g. Deployment Process.** FAC(A)s deployed to contingency operations who are qualified in accordance with this MOA are considered qualified for the duration of the deployment. If necessary, waivers may be granted by the Joint Force Commander (JFC) or designated representative for that AOR for the duration of the deployment on a case-by-case basis. The FAC(A) must regain qualification upon return to home station in accordance with the above stated FAC(A) qualification process.

**h. FAC(A) Documentation (Training Jacket).** To properly document accomplishment of FAC(A) certification and qualification (currency) standards, a method for retaining relevant FAC(A) training and certification documentation will be maintained by the FAC(A)'s operational unit. Through established Service tracking systems, Services will be prepared to present "JFC appropriate" documentation that verifies individual FAC(A)'s certification, qualification, and currency. Where feasible, recommended minimum equivalent documentation includes:

- 1) COMMANDER'S DESIGNATION LETTERS – a copy of the FAC(A)'s current designation letter and a copy of any previous designation letters, if applicable.
- 2) CAS LOG – a record of all controls in a legible format that complies with appendix (a) of this document. This should include records of all controls performed since initial certification.

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portions of certification may be waived until the unit returns to CONUS or deploys to suitable environment.

- 3) DOCUMENTATION OF ASSESSMENTS –documentation of all assessments conducted since initial certification.
- 4) DOCUMENTATION OF TRAINING – all continuation training and refresher training should be documented to include academics and testing.
- 5) FAC(A) Formal School Diplomas. – any certificates received from attending a formal course of instruction pertaining to CAS.

**3. FAC(A) Joint Mission Task List (JMTL).** The following joint mission tasks have been identified for a FAC(A) and will be instrumental for unit appraisal for maintaining FAC(A) qualification. The joint mission tasks are divided into duty areas for academic application and are listed by task and associated sub-tasks.

**Duty Area 01.**

Plan, develop and assess close air support (CAS) requirements in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

- 01.1 Participate in the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP)/ Marine Corps Planning Process (MCPP).
- 01.2 Coordinate the integration of surface fire support (NSFS, field artillery, and mortars, Tactical TLAM, ATACMS, and MLRS) with close air support (CAS) to support the commander's concept of operations.
- 01.3 Interpret fire support coordination measures and impact on air support mission planning.
- 01.4 Integrate joint and component airspace control agencies and joint force connectivity to support CAS operations.
- 01.5 Interpret airspace coordination measures and their impact on air support mission planning.

**Duty Area 02.**

Plan CAS and suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan, based on knowledge of the enemy situation – ground order of battle (GOB) and air defense posture.

- 02.1 Apply the products of the intelligence cycle to close air support mission planning.
- 02.2 Plan CAS targeting in accordance with the Attack Guidance Matrix (AGM) or service guidance based on knowledge of the enemy ground order of battle.
- 02.3 Plan for the Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses (SEAD) during the execution of CAS missions based on knowledge of the enemy air order of battle.

**Duty Area 03.**

Conduct target analysis relative to CAS in order to make weaponeering recommendation for the employment of CAS in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

- 03.1 Apply the products of the targeting process to close air support mission planning.
- 03.2 Demonstrate the capability to perform reconnaissance and locate, validate, and recommend potential CAS targets for suitability in accordance with the AGM or ground commander's guidance and intent.

Duty Area 04.

In preparation for CAS, advise the ground maneuver element commander on the proper employment of CAS assets in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

- 04.1 Advise ground unit commander on fixed wing/rotary wing CAS, fixed wing/rotary wing FAC (A), and CAS UAV capabilities and limitations and the use and timely submission of Joint Tactical Air Strike Requests (JTAR).
- 04.2 Assess effects of weather, terrain, and threat air defenses on CAS capabilities and advise the unit commander accordingly.
- 04.3 Explain effects of aviation ordnance in order to recommend appropriate ordnance to obtain desired weapons effects.
- 04.4 Advise ground unit commander on integrating artillery and naval surface fire support (NSFS) systems with CAS.
- 04.5 Advise ground unit commander on tactical risk management and CAS specific rules of engagement (ROE) in order to mitigate the risk of unintended consequences.

Duty Area 05.

Plan and coordinate CAS missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

- 05.1 Plan day CAS missions, fixed and rotary, in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.
- 05.2 Plan night/adverse weather CAS missions, fixed and rotary, in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.
- 05.3 Plan laser-guided weapon system CAS, in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.
- 05.4 Plan required coordination for coordinate-dependant weapons deliveries in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.
- 05.5 Plan AC-130 fire missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

05.6 Plan required coordination for integrated attack by multiple fire support assets (artillery, mortars, naval surface fires and CAS) to support CAS with target marking, SEAD, and illumination.)

05.7 Develop requisite knowledge to derive accurate target location, match target location format to weapon system, and provide target designation or target marking via means other than indirect fire assets.

Duty Area 06.

Request CAS missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

06.1 Operate organic communications equipment in order to establish communications on designated nets to request and control close air support (CAS).

06.2 Use applicable command and control agencies for requesting CAS missions.

06.3 Complete Joint Tactical Air Strike Request (JTAR) form and route in accordance with JP 3-09.3.

Duty Area 07.

Provide terminal attack control of CAS missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

07.1 Conduct control (Type I, II, and III) of day CAS missions, fixed and/or rotary wing, in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

07.2 Conduct control (Type I, II, and III) of night/adverse weather CAS missions fixed and/or rotary wing, in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

07.3 Demonstrate the capability to classify targets in the battle space.

07.4 Demonstrate the capability to control laser-guided weapon system CAS missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

07.5 Demonstrate the capability to control coordinate-dependant weapons deliveries for CAS missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

07.6 Demonstrate the capability to control AC-130 fire missions in support of the ground combat maneuver plan.

07.7 Demonstrate the capability to coordinate attack by multiple fire support assets (such as artillery, mortars, and naval surface fires), to support CAS with target marking, SEAD, and illumination. Training may be conducted with live, training or simulated ordnance.

07.8 Demonstrate the capability to deconflict aircraft and fires in the target area.

07.9 Demonstrate the capability to deconflict aircraft and aircraft munitions in the target area.

07.10 Demonstrate the capability to self-mark a target and self-generate target coordinates for CAS aircraft.

**Duty Area 08.**

Conduct post-strike assessment for development of battle damage assessment (BDA) for entry into the targeting process.

08.1 Develop battle damage assessment (BDA) for entry into the targeting process.

08.2 Complete a Mission Report (MISREP) with BDA and reattack recommendation.

08.3 Route MISREP in accordance with JP 3-09.3.

4. Waiver Authority. Waiver authority not specifically addressed within this MOA will be in accordance with each Service's directives, but will be no lower than general/flag officer. All waivers will include USJFCOM J85 as an information addressee. USJFCOM J85 will provide copies of waivers to JFTSB voting members to facilitate responsibilities detailed in paragraph 1.c1).

Effective Date, Review, and Termination: This MOA will be effective 01 December 2004. It will be reviewed annually and updated as required. Termination will occur on incorporation in a joint instruction or directive.

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**WILLIAM H. PAYNE**  
Rear Admiral, USNR  
USSOCOM, J3  
Director, Operations Support Group

## Appendix B

### Marine Corps FAC(A) Doctrine and Training Standards References

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1. Marine Corps Order (MCO) P3500.14H: Aviation Training & Readiness Program Manual
2. MCO 3500.48A: AH-1W Cobra Training & Readiness Manual
3. MCO 3500.46: FA-18C/D Training & Readiness Manual
4. MCWP 3-23.1: US Marine Corps Close Air Support
5. MAWTS 1 FAC(A) Academic Support Package
6. MAWTS 1 FAC(A) Handbook